Avenues of Commerce Through Surface Routes

559. SHRI DRUPAD BORGOHAIN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) what is the Government's plan to open the avenues of commerce through surface routes to Myanmar, China, and Bangladesh;

(b) whether it is proposed to use the stilwell road from Ledo (Assam) to Myanmar as Commerce route for Myanmar and China by improving its status to National Express Highway;

(c) what is Government's plan to use the Brahmaputra as river route for Commerce with Bangladesh and abroad;

(d) whether there is any negotiation with Bangladesh for this purpose; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) As per the Agreement on Border Trade between India and Myanmar signed in 1994, two routes viz. Moreh (India)-Tamu (Myanmar) and Champai (India)-Rih (Myanmar) have been notified for the conduct of border trade. At present, the trade between the two countries is taking place through Moreh-Tamu route. The second route i.e. Champai-Rih is yet to be operationalised.

At present, trade with China is taking place through Lipulekh Pass (Uatter Pradesh) and Shipkila Pass (Himachal Pradesh).

As regards trade with Bangladesh, there are two broad gauge linkages at Gode (India)—Darsana (Bangladesh) and Singhabad (India)—Rohanpur (Bangladesh) and two meter gauge linkages at Radhikapur (India)—Birol (Bangladesh) and Mahisasan (India)—Shahbazpur (Bangladesh). Both sides have agreed on the necessity of linking Akhaura—Agartala rail link route.

(b) India and Myanmar have agreed to cooperate with each other for the upgradation/construction of border roads in Myanmar along the Indio-Myanmar border, in the interest of promoting economic cooperation between the two countries. The Myanmar Government,

have agreed, in principle, to the opening of other border points as may be notified by mutual agreement after the smooth functioning of the Moreh-Tamu border point comes into effect There are no existing plans to use the stilwell road most of which runs within Myanmar.

At present, there is no proposal pending to improve stilwell road to National Express Highway status.

(c) to (e) The Inland Water Transit and Trade Protocol between India and Bangladesh provides the framework for transportation of cargo through eight specified inland water routes including the Brahmaputra. Recently, a Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade between India and Bangladesh was renewed. Both sides have agreed to set up a Joint Group of Experts to consider, inter alia, the modalities for the movement of goods from one point in India to another through Bangladesh and modalities for border trade between India and Bangladesh.

Development of Industries in North-Eastern Region

560. SHRI W. ANGOU SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a plan for development of industries in the North-Eastern Region; and

(b) if so, the proposals of each State and by when these will be taken up?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN): (a and (b) Government, has announced a new industrial policy for the North-Eastern Region on 24th December 1997 to promote industrialisation of the region. The various provisions of the policy have been implemented through issuance of necessary notifications. These measures are expected to attract industries into the region. There are no proposals of the States with Ministry of Commerce and Industry.